

From: Richard Windsor/DC/USEPA/US
Sent: 1/22/2012 1:30:11 PM
To: perciasepe.bob@epa.gov; Sussman.bob@epa.gov; thompson.diane@epa.gov
CC:
Subject: Fw: Scranton Times Tribune Editorial: In Dimock, EPA acts in public interest

FYI.

----- Original Message -----

From: Richard Windsor

Sent: 01/22/2012 01:13 PM EST

To: Ex. 6 - Personal Privacy

Ex. 6 - Personal Privacy

Subject: Fw: Scranton Times Tribune Editorial: In Dimock, EPA acts in public interest

Folk

Ex. 5 - Deliberative

Lisa

----- Original Message -----

From: Betsaida Alcantara

Sent: 01/22/2012 12:30 PM EST

To: Richard Windsor; Bob Perciasepe; Bob Sussman; Diane Thompson; Brendan Gilfillan; Mathy Stanislaus; Lisa Feldt; Shawn Garvin; Arvin Ganesan; Alisha Johnson; Andra Belknap; David Bloomgren; Cynthia Giles-AA

Subject: Scranton Times Tribune Editorial: In Dimock, EPA acts in public interest

Scranton Times-Tribune

Editorial: In Dimock, EPA acts in public interest

The Corbett administration's recent characterization of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as naive interlopers evaporated like so much gas last week.

Federal investigators began testing water supplies for 61 homes in Dimock, Susquehanna County, and delivering clean water to four homes where independent testing has found health threats in contaminated water.

In December, the state Department of Environmental Protection ignored the state constitutional guarantee of clean water for Pennsylvanians, and allowed Cabot Oil & Gas Co. to stop delivering clean water to the affected homes in Dimock Twp., on grounds that the company had fulfilled terms of an agreement.

That agreement between the DEP and the company required Cabot to create escrow accounts for twice the value of affected properties and to offer water filtration systems.

The issue isn't fulfilling agreements but determining whether drilling and hydraulic fracturing adversely affect the water supply. Yet when the Environmental Protection Agency continued its investigation, Michael Krancer, secretary of the state environmental agency, claimed that the federal agency had only a "rudimentary" understanding of the situation.

In water samples from eight Dimock properties, an EPA toxicologist had found "noteworthy concentrations" of chemicals that do not occur naturally in the local water.

To ensure that its understanding of the situation is not "rudimentary," the EPA comprehensively will test water samples from a nine-square-mile area and fill in gaps it has found in the data compiled by other parties, including Mr. Krancer's agency.

Beyond the local water quality issue, the EPA's investigation is nationally significant. It follows another EPA inquiry in Wyoming that, for the first time, indicates a link between hydraulic fracturing - the process used to extract gas from deep shale deposits - and contaminated ground water.

Given the abundance of shale gas and its growing role in the nation's energy portfolio, it's crucial to gain a comprehensive understanding of the environmental consequences of its extraction. In seeking those answers, the EPA serves the public interest.

----- Original Message -----

From: Betsaida Alcantara

Sent: 01/21/2012 10:53 AM EST

To: Richard Windsor; Bob Perciasepe; Bob Sussman; Diane Thompson; Brendan Gilfillan; Mathy Stanislaus; Lisa Feldt; Shawn Garvin; Arvin Ganesan; Alisha Johnson; Andra Belknap; David Bloomgren; Cynthia Giles-AA

Subject: AP and Scranton Times Tribune stories on today's Dimock water delivery

AP: Water delivered to Pa. village with tainted wells

A tanker truck has made its first delivery of fresh water to four homes in a northeastern Pennsylvania village where federal regulators say they found arsenic and chemicals often used in gas drilling in the well water.

The Environmental Protection Agency paid for Friday's delivery in Dimock, Susquehanna County, after reviewing water sampling data that regulators say revealed high levels of pollution in residential wells.

Anti-drilling activists hailed the EPA move at a news conference.

But Houston-based driller Cabot Oil & Gas Corp., the company blamed for the polluting the wells, issued a statement criticizing EPA for its involvement, saying state regulators had already determined the residents' water met federal regulatory standards. Cabot also noted that EPA told the residents less than two months ago their water was safe.

Scranton Times: EPA water deliveries arrive in Dimock

By Laura Legere (Staff Writer)

Published: January 21, 2012

DIMOCK TWP. - The first tanker of water from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency reached Carter Road on Friday in what will become a regular delivery to four homes as federal regulators investigate the impact of natural gas drilling on drinking water here.

Encouraged by supporters of the affected families who were cheering its arrival, the turquoise truck stopped in front of the Sautner home with a double blast of its horn before contractors unrolled a hose and started to fill a bulk tank in the yard. The delivery came a day after the federal agency announced it will conduct its own sampling of 61 water wells in a 9-square-mile area of Dimock after its review of data collected by the state, gas driller Cabot Oil & Gas Corp. and other firms raised concerns about groundwater contamination connected to Cabot's expansive drilling operations in the area. The deliveries of water drawn in Easton may stop or expand to other homes, depending on what the EPA discovers through its sampling, beginning with the four homes where an EPA toxicologist said past results raised either "potential" or "imminent and substantial" health concerns. Other homes to be tested include 17 properties where the state found methane from faulty Cabot wells seeping into water supplies, 30 homes in the immediate area that have been sampled in the past and 10 homes where evidence of health impacts may be connected to contaminated groundwater or where new data could fill past gaps, the agency said.

The EPA has invited both the state and Cabot to perform simultaneous sampling at the water wells it tests, Community Involvement Coordinator Trish Taylor said.

The state Department of Environmental Protection wants to take simultaneous samples at the 61 homes, spokeswoman Katherine Gresh said, but it was rejected by a "significant number" of homeowners on Friday when staff members called for permission to access their water wells.

"We've let EPA know this and will work to analyze additional water samples that they intend to take on those properties and give to us," she said.

Cabot spokesman George Stark said the company has accepted the EPA's offer even as it criticized the agency's actions.

The company denies causing any contamination in Dimock and says the water quality reflects natural conditions. Cabot released a statement Friday saying it is "disappointed" in the EPA's sampling program, which it called "inconsistent" with state regulators' findings and EPA's own earlier statements about the quality of the water.

"What is needed is an objective approach to dealing with community concerns - something missing in recent EPA actions," the statement said. "EPA's changing posture on sampling in Dimock is indicative of a broader problem of inconsistency with scientific process and a lack of cooperation with state and private sector parties."

The deliveries Friday were met by families and drilling critics rallying in support of the EPA's actions who accused state regulators of failing to help them and enabling bad practices by the industry.

"The EPA's stated policy is to step in where states have failed to enforce," filmmaker Josh Fox said, "which means the state of Pennsylvania and Gov. Tom Corbett has failed in its obligation to protect the citizens of Pennsylvania."

Ms. Gresh said any statement that DEP has failed the homeowners is "absolutely inaccurate and is not grounded in reality."

"DEP has upheld the law on behalf of the affected homeowners in Dimock every step of the way," she said. "Every resident has been given an opportunity to have their water supply repaired or replaced" through a December 2010 settlement between DEP and Cabot. That settlement, which replaced an earlier state-sponsored plan to provide Dimock residents with a public waterline, also required Cabot to pay more than \$4 million into escrow accounts for the families. Dimock residents urged federal regulators to supply water to more families, especially four of eight families to whom water deliveries were promised by the EPA two weeks ago and then almost immediately revoked. Some of those same families were mistakenly told Thursday they would be receiving water, then received calls later apologizing for the error.

Ms. Taylor, who said she made many of those calls, admitted "there was some miscommunication and we were not prepared" when the first promises were made.

"We wanted to be able to provide water to people we knew were running out of water," she said. "We tried to get a water truck set up and have it deliver, but it did fall through."

The four homes on the original list that are not receiving water will be sampled first before the EPA decides if water deliveries are necessary, she said. She emphasized that EPA headquarters is "very aware" of what the Philadelphia-based regional office is doing.

"It is a national concern," she said.